

HTTYD Original Short Stories

by DivergentDragon

Category: How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Adventure, Tragedy

Language: English

Characters: Astrid, Hiccup, Stormfly, Toothless

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2014-06-20 05:20:40

Updated: 2014-06-20 05:20:40

Packaged: 2016-04-26 19:14:21

Rating: M

Chapters: 5

Words: 20,790

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: HTTYD I've always been a huge fan of the HTTYD Series (Elated HTTYD2 came out!) and I had been thinking about some cool characters that I thought would make great Vikings. I hope you enjoy my little stories and such; I wrote them all just for you! They do have minor violence and adult considered scenes, but nothing "Dirty" so to speak. Anyways, Enjoy!

1. Preface

HTTYD

I've always been a huge fan of the HTTYD Series (Elated HTTYD2 came out!) and I had been thinking about some cool characters that I thought would make great Vikings. I hope you enjoy my little stories and such; I wrote them all just for you!

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Anyways, Enjoy!

2. Luella

Luella.

I am Luella. I am 6 years old as of last month on the 7th. My parents are gone, my brothers and sisters have disappeared and I am alone; at least for now.

This is the story of how I came to be. How my life fell apart. How I met some strange people. How I fell in love with an adorable little Dragon. How I began.

"Luella!" He called me, his voice angered and gruff. My father,

Pilgrit, was a well-known man around the village of Berk. He sold mutton down at the local shops and was an asset to our village when there would be Dragon attacks. He was kind and caring... until my mother died. After that, he was no longer sane.

I walked down from the loft to see my father by the ashy fire pit. Embers were left. I had forgotten to place more wood among them.

"Luella, what is the meaning of this?" He slurred. In his hand was his mug. His face drooped and he was most certainly drunk. "I told you nearly half an hour 'go to keep the fire go-oing," he picked up an ember and threw it at me. The ember didn't reach me, though I stumbled back a bit. "You, lil' girl, are in for a whoopin!" He said delighted. He dumped out his mug and filled it with embers. I ran back upstairs in attempt to hide. Though drunk, my father was not slow. He grabbed my ankle and pulled me down the stairs, scraping my cheek as I went.

"Daddy stop! Please!" I called to him. For a moment, I thought there was a hint of sorrow in his eyes, until he blinked and flung his cup at my face. I screamed and stopped immediately. If I were to be loud and show that I was in pain, my father would throw me to the Nadders. He dumped the burning coals in to my hands and I dropped them. He took a moment to find his rum again. I took this time to escape.

I jumped up, ran to the door and burst out in to the night. I heard my father calling after me, threatening me as I ran up to Stoick the Vast and Hiccup Horrendous Haddock's home without thinking. I began banging on the doors as tears welled over my eyes and I cried. It being maybe 3 in the morning, I didn't think they would be up. My dad staggered up the hill behind me and gripped my wrists. The sleeves fell and revealed my bare arms, covered with cuts and bruises from previous beatings. The door flew open and Stoick stopped in surprise. He looked at my arms and became infuriated.

My father dropped me and I held my arms. A 6 year old should not have to go through this. Pilgrit stuttered and slurred.

"I, uhm, this... it's... I, er.." He said.

"No. Pilgrit, you are banished. You are to leave this village right now or I'll shove you off the edge of this Earth myself, Thor help me!" Stoick recited. Hiccup stood behind him a moment taking in what was happening. He saw me on the ground, piled and in tears, my bare arms revealed, cuts, bruises in all, and then rushed to me. He stood me up as best he could, being a hiccup and all, when Pilgrit reached over to me and grabbed my wrist.

"Odin gave me a mistake. You're worth nothin' to this world no more girl," Stoick ripped Pilgrits hands from me and Hiccup took me inside. That night, Stoick chained Pilgrit to an old boat and sent him to fall off the edge of the Earth.

Over the coming months of winter, I was accepted in to the Haddock's clan and considered as Stoick's child, or Hiccup's little sister. Of course, when Hiccup befriended a Night Fury, things became hectic, but that's a whole other story. I took care of Toothless while Hiccup recovered from their battle with the Red Death and the playful Night Fury became quite fond of me over the few months.

Since Pilgrit's banishment, I became shy. I only spoke to Toothless, Hiccup and occasionally Stoick. I avoided other kids in the village at times because I was terrified they would ask of my scars. I didn't often speak with anyone at all. Until one day, two teenagers washed up in an old beaten down dingy on the beach.

"Hello... Who're you?" Stoick greeted them cautiously. There was a boy and a girl. The boy had sleek black hair and was skinny as a twig. His clothes were worn and tattered. Grey as all get out. He stood in front of the girl protectively and said nothing. The girl on the other hand was bright. Her hair was blond, even more so than Astrid's. She wore a faded brown shirt and carried a hatchet on her hip.

"We're starving," The boy said, "I'm Camden and this is Wynter," The girl behind Camden looked pale. Her knees buckled and Camden caught her before she fell. Being weakened himself, he barely had the strength to catch his balance.

"Hiccup. Get Toothless to bring them up to the Great Hall. We'll get them some food and get their stories later. I have to figure out what Mildew wants," Stoick ordered and walked back up the docks to the village. Hiccup and I struggled to get them on to Toothless and bring them to the Great Hall, but eventually we did. They ate as I set up a place for them to stay and sleep in a back room of the Hall. After eating, the two strangers crashed in that room and slept for hours. Hiccup and I decided to go flying with Toothless and Astrid and asked if I wanted to come along.

"No thanks Hiccup. Tomorrow?" I said quietly. Hiccup nodded and ran out of the Hall to Toothless and they flew off. I sat in the hall reading the Book of Dragons for a long time until Camden came out of that back room and sat down at my table across from me.

"Hi," He said. I waved shyly and slunk down on the bench trying to hide within the Book of Dragons. "What's your name?" He asked.

"Luella..." I said quietly. I felt my anxiety levels shoot up and my hands became clammy. He set his hands out on the table and twiddled with his thumbs.

"Gee, that's a really pretty name. I'm Camden," He said kindly. He held out his hand as though offering a handshake. I slowly came out from behind the book and reached out to take his hand. "You sure are shy aren't you?" I nodded and smiled slightly.

After a moment of silence, I thought to myself, 'Well he's not too bad... Maybe... Maybe you could talk to him.' I opened my mouth to speak but was interrupted.

"You and that boy... Hiccup? Yeah, Hiccup, seem pretty close. Is he your brother?" Camden asked. I shook my head. "Who is he? Best friend? Relative?" I shook my head again.

"Stoick and him let me live with them. My daddy was banished a couple months ago..." I self-consciously pulled my sleeves down past my palms and held them with my fingers. Stoick walked in to the Great Hall just as Wynter emerged from the back room looking well

rested.

"Ah, you're both awake. That's great. Now, you two are gonna tell me what you're doin' on my island right now," He demanded. Wynter and Stoick came over and sat down at the table, Stoick next to me and Wynter next to Camden.

Wynter did most of the talking. As it turns out, they were captured by Alvin and a few of his Outkasts, and separated from their families. Wynter was taken as a prisoner 2 or 3 months ago and Camden was captured at an early age as a servant to Alvin. Wynter portrayed herself as a fighter and claims to be fluent with all weapons. Camden learned a lot from the outkasts and was trained to be a silent assassin. He knew lots about Berk and when Wynter helped him escape, he directed the boat to sail straight to the shores of the island.

"And that's the story", Wynter finished. "Please, Stoick the Vast, you've got to give us a place to stay. We have nowhere else to go!" She pleaded. Camden's eyes saddened and their stomachs growled loudly.

"Hmm," Stoick thought, "You may stay," Camden and Wynter grinned happily and hugged each other. "If..." Stoick added, "You agree to take Luella in to your hands and prove you are responsible," he said, patting me on the back lightly. My face became hot and pale. "Everything alright, Lu?" He asked. I nodded and thought to myself.

'Things could go well, you have to look at the happy side Lu,' and that's what I did.

Over the course of the next 3 months, I'd moved out of Stoick and Hiccup's house as it was very crowded with Toothless, Hiccup and I rooming together, and back in to my old home where I'd grown up getting beaten and yelled at by my abusive father.

Eventually, Camden and Wynter learned of my tale and treated me with extra care. Wynter and Camden both got jobs nearby while I went to Dragon Training class with the kids around the village and Hiccup taught us, though I knew everything already. I continued to remain silent except to Hiccup, Wynter and Camden.

One day, I had found the courage to sneak in to my parents' old room. There, I found mom's old jewelry box. One particular bracelet caught my eye.

It was an old bracelet, maybe 20 years old, long before my time, and tattered. It was made of string and had a small circlet that connected the string to a pendent of a magnificent black, curled Dragon and a hammer on the opposite side. I took it off the shelf and put it on. Almost instantly, I felt immense power rush to my fingertips. My hair stood on end and I felt strong enough to lift a mountain. That feeling soon faded and I felt like shy Luella again. That was until I heard a voice.

"Luella," it boomed, "I am Odin," I gasped, "Your mother, Ingradt, chose thee to inherit this magic chain. Thou are to use it wisely for with this chain comes great responsibility," I nodded. "Thou will soon find out thy legacy to live by and fulfill it with honor," I

nodded almost in a trance and adjusted the bracelet. The Dragon on the pendant came to life and fastened it to my wrist so it would never fall off unless broken.

I went to bed that night and hoped that when I woke I'd realize it would only be a dream.

Boy, I was wrong.

The next day I woke and there it was on my wrist, that simple yet eccentric bracelet that was once my mothers. Although, I'd had a strange feeling about today. Something seemed off.

I decided to push it aside and walked down from the loft. Wynter and Camden had gone to work and left me some breakfast. I ate quickly and left for Dragon Training. On my way over to the arena, I heard Vikings talking in hushed tones.

One of them said, "Did you hear? Toothless has got a little sister!" Others exclaimed, "There is no way Hiccup can take care of them both!" I wondered what they were talking about. I decided I'd ask Hiccup when I got to the arena.

Hiccup stood with Astrid and Fishlegs and the three of them were silently chatting amongst themselves. When I walked up to them, Hiccup turned and announced to the class, "Alright everyone, take a seat." Everyone sat down except for me. I slunk off in to the corner and pulled my sleeves farther down. "As you all may have heard, Toothless discovered another Night Fury in the forest this morning." I gasped loudly. The class looked at me. Feeling nervous, I ran out of the arena and back to my house.

"A new Night Fury?" I thought to myself. I went through my knowledge about the Night Fury that I had learned from the Book of Dragons. Night Furies were the offspring of Lightning and Death itself so for a Night Fury to be born, something must have died during a lightning storm. I pushed those thoughts aside and decided I would clean the house so Wynter wouldn't need to bother when she got home.

Hours went by and I had walked to the Great Hall to look at the Book of Dragons for more information about the Night Fury. I passed around the backs of Hiccup, Astrid and Toothless standing in front of a huge group which I figured must have been the entire village. I caught a glimpse of a full Night Fury tail laying on the ground and a small green orb poking around by Toothless's claws.

I ran in to the Great Hall hoping I was unseen and looked around. The Hall was empty but the fire was glowing and there were plates and mugs all about the tables. What Hiccup has to say has to be pretty important for people to leave their beloved mutton on the tables for the Terrible Terrors to eat while they're gone.

I walked in to a small room near the back and got the Book of Dragons. I had thought Fishlegs would have taken it though he's already read it maybe 8 times. I opened the page to the Night Fury and began reading. Everything on the page from before Hiccup had trained Toothless was still there but smudged and parts of it were crossed out. On the page to the right, Hiccup had drawn in his copy of Toothless from his old notebook but with a full tail.

I continued to read until Toothless burst through the door, his eyes only black slits. From his mouth hung a small Night Fury, maybe two feet tall and 4 feet long. The little Dragon's eyes glowed darker than the green of a pine tree. I jumped up and hid behind a nearby support beam. Toothless showed up to my right and I jumped again. He stared at me with those slits of black for eyes and the little baby Night Fury looked at me as well with huge, welcoming ones.

Toothless made a noise that sounded a bit like a Human stomach growling and set the baby Dragon on the ground. The little Night Fury crawled towards me cautiously and I slowly kneeled to the ground. I pulled a piece of fish from off of a nearby table and held it out for the little guy. The Dragon took it and swallowed it whole without even retracting its teeth. It hopped on to my legs and proceeded to push me back on to the floor and licked my face.

"Seems as though she likes Luella," Hiccup said running in to get Toothless. "Did you pick Lu?" He asked Toothless. Toothless shoved his head in to Hiccup's arms and his eyes became big and loving again. "So, Luella, I guess she's yours then. I figured Toothless should be the one to decide whether she be let free or trained. He picked trained and trained by you."

"Sh-she?" I spattered. Hiccup nodded.

"What are you going to name her?" He asked.

I took a moment to think to myself. I looked at my wrist and thought about my mother. Her full name was Ingradt Faith Haddock. "Faith," I said. My little Night Fury would be named after my mother. A tear formed though I pushed it back. I began to pet Faith and spoke to her.

Faith growled playfully and flipped off of me and on to her back, belly up. I got on to my knees and began to rub her stomach as though she were a dog. Pure happiness filled my heart and I felt as though I could talk to everyone again. I rolled up my sleeves to keep them out of the way of my fingertips and saw my scars. My smile faded slowly. Hiccup watched me and realized who Faith was named after. He and Toothless walked over to me and comforted me. Faith rolled on to her claws and looked at my wrists. She hobbled over and licked them.

To my surprise, the scars on my wrists faded from a deep red to a light red and almost disappeared entirely. Hiccup gasped.

"I guess Night Fury saliva has some sort of healing power!" He said excitedly. I looked over to him and saw a smiling face with an arm around Toothless's jaw. I smiled too.

For the first time I felt free from my past. Like I had a future with all these great people around me... And I was going to make the most of it.

A few weeks passed and people congratulated me on my new friend. Though I didn't make eye contact or reply, my little Dragon did that for me. I told Faith absolutely everything. She knows more about my background better than anyone. She became my best friend over those few weeks.

Faith was growing up and so was I. I'd asked Hiccup for help with

training her and Hiccup told me that he'd rather not train her in the Arena. He said that there was a better place for us to train.

That day, Hiccup asked me to go for a ride with him and Toothless and to bring Faith. I agreed happily to do so and met him by Gobber's shop an hour or so later.

"Hey Lu. You ready to go?" Hiccup asked as I strolled up to him and Toothless. I tossed a fish to Toothless and Faith jumped on to his face trying to catch it. I giggled and nodded.

"Oh, where ye goin'?" Gobber called from the back of the shop. Hiccup unhooked himself from Toothless's saddle, helped me up on to the back of Toothless and then got up again himself, grunting as he did so.

"Just for a little flight." He responded. Gobber came out of the shop with a hook for a hand and a metal mask over his face. I gasped quietly and hid behind Hiccup and Faith crawled up from Toothless's face and in to my lap.

"Ay, well, have fun kids. I'm goin' to get a new pair of undies made. These ones are a bit... used." I gagged as Gobber turned to walk off.

"Thanks, uh, Gobber, I'm sure that information will be so useful sometime." Hiccup said. Gobber raised his good hand and waved back at us, still walking further in to town.

Hiccup patted Toothless and he took off, fast, to the sky. I hollered happily, clinging tightly to Hiccup so I wouldn't fall, while Faith let her tongue hang loose out of her mouth. Hiccup turned slightly and wrapped one arm around my shoulder and said something that I couldn't hear over the roaring wind in my ears. I laughed and hollered again, Hiccup joining in this time.

"This is amazing!" He shouted, letting the 'a's in Amazing trail on some. I laughed and looked around at the clouds, my hair whipping around wildly in my face. Toothless let up on the speed a little and we glided over soft fluff. I raised my hand and felt the moisture from a cloud wrap around my hand and wrist.

"I love it when Toothless does that." I said. I set my hand on Toothless's back and rubbed him. Faith curled up in my lap, terrified of the height. I set my other hand on one of her wings and she relaxed some.

"This is the hard part, Lu." Hiccup said, turning halfway so he could look at me. I furrowed my brow and awaited an explanation. "Faith has to learn to fly on her own sometime. Now would be that time." I pursed my lips and took a deep breath. Hiccup noticed my frustration and commented, "She's like a bird. The mom has to let the birds try on their own." I nodded slowly and let the breath go. "Don't worry, if she can't do it, Toothless will catch her." He winked at me awkwardly and patted Toothless's ear. "Up, bud." He said. Toothless roared in joy and shifted his wings, Hiccup positioning his metal foot so that Toothless could work his tail on his own.

We reached the top of the clouds and Hiccup pushed a few levers forwards, releasing his metal foot. He stood and told me to do the

same. "Hold on to Faith."

"What? Why?"

"We're going to jump." He held out his arms to keep his balance as we flew forward slowly. Hiccup looked at Toothless and made eye contact, nodding. Toothless seemed to smile and shook his head happily. He knew what was going to happen.

I stood and held my arm out to Faith. She hopped up and I moved her closer to my chest, wrapping my other arm around her. She squirmed in to a more comfortable position and I adjusted with her.

"Ready?" Hiccup asked me. He patted my back; I looked at him and nodded. "1..." I felt the adrenaline begin coursing through my body. What if Toothless can only catch one of us? What if he can't catch both me and Faith? "2..." What if I drop her? Could Toothless catch her then? "3!" Hiccup shouted. He pushed me off Toothless and then jumped himself. I screamed and closed my eyes, digging my face in to Faiths ears. She cried out along with me and Hiccup only screamed joyously. I opened my eyes to see Toothless still as high up as when we jumped and then slowly turned to face the water. Faith squirmed and struggled in my grasp and I found myself letting her slip from my arms. I gripped my left wrist with my right hand. I started screaming for Hiccup to help me, desperately trying to get a grip on Faith again, but had no luck.

Above us, Toothless screeched and dove downwards, curving his spiral in half of a circle. Faith continued to slip from my grip and I felt myself starting to cry. She flexed her wings, spinning us to face the sky again and making me break my wrist lock. She jumped upwards from my arms, clawing my cheek as she did so. I screamed and reached for her but she was out of reach. Toothless shot from out of nowhere, picking me out of the air like a berry from a bush. Hanging from his hind legs was Hiccup, smiling and laughing like a madman. Tears streamed down my face and Hiccup's laughter immediately became determination. Toothless first threw me upwards over his head, shaking his head happily as I landed on his saddle. Moments later, both Hiccup and I sat on his back, searching the skies frantically for Faith.

I wiped my eyes with my sleeves and leaned over Toothless's neck, peering downwards towards the water below.

"There!" I shouted as I spotted a small black animal hurtling to the waves. I saw her struggling to catch balance in the air. Hiccup pulled the levers back, sticking his metal foot in a small contraption made for him to direct Toothless's hand built wing.

"Hold on!" I gripped the saddle and held on as Toothless jerked to the left and then spiraled downward. My feet lifted off of Toothless's back, my hair flipping all around my face while Hiccup rigorously jerked his metal foot this way and that, trying to steady us. Toothless cried out in a, what sounded like a, dragon scream and lifted his wings, slowing us down abruptly. I looked over the side, pulling my feet back to the saddle and didn't see Faith.

I immediately assumed the worst. Tears filled my eyes and my throat seemed to swell. My heart beat rapidly, as if it were going to burst

right through my chest.

"Do you see her?" Hiccup yelled over the wind. I sat, still, and held my breath, jaw dropped and eyes watering. Hiccup glanced back at me when I didn't answer and did a double take. "Toothless, land over there, that cliff."

Once we landed, I immediately jumped off Toothless and ran to the edge of the cliff. "Faith!" I shouted. "Faith!" Again, more desperately. "Faith..." I said again, this time falling to my knees. I let my hands catch my head as I sat on my feet at the edge of the platform. The tears I was fighting back spilled over my eyelids and on to the hardened dirt. "She's gone, gone. It's my entire fault!" I stuttered. Hiccup jumped off Toothless and pet him just above his eye before moving over to me.

"Luella?" He said quietly. Toothless purred quietly and stepped over towards me and Hiccup. Hiccup kneeled next to me and set his hand on my back.

Feeling a mix of emotions, I shrugged him off angrily, sadly, frustrated, and mournfully. "Gods, Hiccup, leave me alone!" I shouted at him. I had never done that to him before. It took me a moment to realize what I'd said, and when I did, I looked at Hiccup.

His eyes were sad, mouth dropped and freckles weren't as visible as usual, as if he was hiding them from me. He looked hurt. I sat, letting tears fall freely from my eyes thinking.

The last time I'd ever shrugged Hiccup off was when he tended to my wounds that Pilgrit had given me. The last time I'd shrugged anyone else off, it was Pilgrit, and I had gotten a major beating from it. I had the scars on my back to prove it. I felt terrible for yelling at him like that.

"Hiccup... I-" My voice cracked and I felt another wave of emotion fall on to me. Sorrow, remorse, guilt. I ran to Hiccup and threw my arms around his neck, jumping up a little to reach him. "I'm really sorry. I've never... I'm sorry." I cried in to his shoulder.

"Lu, hey, it's okay."

"No... No, Hiccup, it's not." I let go of him and looked him dead in the eye. "I just killed my best friend." Tears welled in my eyes again and I didn't bother to fight them. Hiccup looked at me in shock. I sat down on the ledge, one knee up with my chin resting on it. "She got free and fell longer and farther than we did and we couldn't save..." I sniffed, "save her." I wiped my eyes on my sleeves and looked at Toothless. "Toothless trusted me with... with the only other known Night Fury known to Viking and I just- I killed her! She's gone, it's all my fault!" I threw my head in to my hands again and cried, hard. Hiccup sat next to me and put his arm on my shoulder. I didn't shrug him off this time.

"Heyâ€¦ come on now, Lu. It wasn't your fault."

"Yes! Hiccup, it was! She got loose from _my_grip!" I was raising my voice when I shouldn't have. I sniffled and looked at the water churning a long ways beneath my feet. "Pilgrit was right... I am a disgrace..." I mumbled, crying again.

Hiccup scooted closer to me and pulled me in to his small, bony chest. "Never tell me that again, Lu, or I swear to the gods above I will throw myself off this cliff." He said sternly. I cried hard in to his yak fur vest and shook my head. "Pilgrit's words are nothing but yak's butt." I choked out a laugh at that. "Pilgrit did a number on you, yeah, and it's something you'll have to live with Lu, but you have to make sure that you know that all those hurtful things that he told you are lies. None of it is true. Not a single bit." He wrapped his other hand around my shoulders and let me cry in to his vest.

"She's gone, Hiccup." I choked. "Faith is all gone, my best friend." I cried hard for a long time, breathing hard and dehydrating myself.

Moments passed in silence until Toothless groaned, nudging Hiccup. "Not now Toothless." He held me tighter. Toothless nudged Hiccup again and Hiccup turned his head to look at him. "What Toothless, can't you—" He stopped abruptly and started tapping my shoulders rapidly. "Lu... Lu! Lu! Look!" I raised my head and wiped my eyes again with my sleeves. I looked at Toothless and behind him saw a small black thing flapping its wings and moving closer to us. It almost looked like an ashen Terrible Terror.

"Faith... Faith!" I shouted, standing and running to the other side of the platform. I held my arms out to her and prepared myself for impact.

Faith came barreling in to me, stepping all over my torso, licking my face and hopping around excitedly. I smiled and laughed, happily and gratefully. Hiccup laughed and knelt down to pet her, Toothless jumping happily behind him. Faith jumped up and flapped her wings, hovering in place over me. I gasped and looked at Hiccup.

"She is flying!" I exclaimed. He nodded and helped me up.

"That's what dragons do best. Well, second best."

"Wait, what's the best thing they can do?" Hiccup took a step back and wrapped his arm around Toothless's jaw.

"They make perfect friends." Toothless shifted his front claws and turned, licking hiccup's face and vest. Hiccup fell over and Toothless stood over him, licking his face and torso. I held out my arm for Faith and she landed on me, crawling over my shoulders. "Toothless! Hey!" Toothless kept licking him, "Hey! You know this doesn't wash out!" I laughed and lifted my arm to scratch Faith's chin. I was so grateful to have her back, I didn't even care that she was drooling all over my hair and vest.

3. Camden (Part I)

Camden (Part I)

"Mom!" I shouted, desperately. "Dad!" I threw my arms out to reach them, but they were already gone. "No!" I screamed louder. Catapults were fired and our ship was going down in flames. My parents lay dead or unconscious on the other side of our sinking boat. I was stuck

under the fallen mast and smoke was filling my lungs.

A burning ball of twine and dried grass soared overhead and smashed into the captains quarters, the captain being my dad. I squirmed and struggled, trying to free myself from my charred prison. Another flaming ball of twine hit the mast somewhat closer to me and flung the mast upward and through the middle of the deck. I scrambled out of the way of another ball, though this one was rock and not flaming, and jumped across the hole the mast had made.

"Mom, Dad!" I screamed. I ducked and jumped over debris and kneeled between my parents. I took both of their hands in mine and prayed to the gods they would live.

"Please.. If anyone, take me. Let them survive, Odin please." Tears were streaming down my ash-stained face. I leaned over and kissed my mom's cheek, whispering, "I love you," as I did so. I turned to my shallowly breathing father who opened his eyes, weakly. I took his hand and held it closer to my face. He looked at me and held my face with his hand.

"You have much to learn, my son. I love you Camden. Your mom does too." He said bleakly. He glanced over at my mother, tears slowly coming to his eyes. I, myself, couldn't fight the flow of tears that drew clean lines through the ash, burned on to my skin. "If ever you get home-" he coughed, wincing in pain, "remember, 'The Nadder flies between the sun and the stars, though Odin cannot find him.' Pieces of rock rained on to us and loud explosions from the flaming ammo hitting our mostly sunken boat. "You have much to learn. So... Much.." He trailed off. His eyes closed slowly and his hand fell from my cheek. He breathed his final breath.

"Dad? Dad!" I shouted. "Dad please! You can't leave.. Not both of you, please come back!" I cried. I sat holding their hands in my lap and awaited death. A few more fireballs shot by overhead, until finally they ended. The night grew quiet aside from the burning pieces of hull still floating atop the water's surface. The piece of hull I sat on with my deceased parents was slowly splitting apart. I took my mom and pushed her to my dad, taking her necklace off as I did so. A family heirloom and keepsake, to remember them-bye.

I hopped on to the other piece of driftwood that separated from them, clutching my mother's necklace I'm my hand and said a silent goodbye.

Where to now?

I lay down and cry. My face black from ash and my black hair now singed from the fire. I floated past pieces of flaming wood and watched others sink to the depths of the ocean.

I lay there, tears gently falling from my eyes, some rolling over the bridge of my nose and dripping on to the charred wood. Hours seemingly floated by, me completely unaware of my whereabouts. I'd fallen asleep after a while, hoping that maybe the gods would kill me too.

But instead I woke up to the sound of clinking chains, gruff voices and heavy breathing. I didn't bother to hide despite the fact that I had no idea where I was or who they were. I decided that if they're

heartless murderers, or maybe even a Monstrous Nightmare bound in chains, that they have every right to kill me. I'm an orphan now, I have no one to go back to on the mainland. I'm better off dead.

"Ay, Alvin. We've got sometin' here. Looks like it washed up from the wreckage." One man said with a slurred, total Viking accent. They came closer and I kept my eyes closed. I wished not to see my finders.

"Is it dead?" A woman asked.

"If it is, we'll let the Dragons take care of it." The man with the slurred voice said. I heard sand shift and felt a large presence looking over me. I shuddered at the cold feeling it gave me. "Looks like it's still alive. He just shook!" I felt a soft breeze and then someone gently touching my arm.

"He's alive. I feel a pulse and I can see 'im breathin'." The woman said. I groaned and rolled over, the woman jumping back a little ways.

"Take 'im with us. He could be of service when he wakes up." A man with a very gruff voice said. That man seemed scary.

Before I knew it, I was lifted up off my plank and thrown over someone's shoulder. I grunted and opened my eyes. A woman with dark brown hair, braided and thrown over the front of her shoulder armor and a horned helmet walked behind me, unaware I was awake, and the man who had spiked shoulder pads on. I closed my eyes and groaned in discomfort as we walked upwards for a very long time, the man careless of the cargo he carried on his shoulder.

Eventually the man set me down on cold rock, slammed something behind him that sounded like steel bars and left. A few moments later, someone else came in, opened the screeching bars and put a blanket over me. I blinked my eyes open slowly and tiredly, to see who my caretaker was.

"Hello." She said. It was the woman with the braided, brown hair. She was still dressed in armor but it wasn't as decked out as it had been before. A camo-green, chain-linked breastplate without the shoulder pads, her horned helmet, wrist cuffs, and a black chain skirt. At her hip was a small sheath with a beautifully carved handle sticking out. There were metal bars, as I'd predicted, between us though the door to my prison was open.

I looked blankly at her and groaned, my stomach growling at me for food. Wincing in pain, I curled up on the rocks beneath my blanket and held my stomach. The woman moved quickly and quietly, leaving for a moment and coming back with a plate of bread, yak milk and goat cheese. She sat me up, leaning me against the stone wall and handed me the plate of food.

Gingerly, I took the bread first and slowly moved it to my mouth. Weakened, it was hard to pick up even the simplest of things. I finished my food and the woman took my plate and glass, setting them on the ground beside the cell.

"Hello." She said again. I blinked and opened my mouth to speak.

"Hi." I said weakly. My voice sounded like it had been thrown to a pit of Gronkles, torn up by their teeth and thrown back out of the pit.

"What's your name?" She asked, staring intently at me.

"Aren't you guys going to kill me?" She laughed softly. Her laugh gave me comfort somehow.

"No, no! Alvin said we could keep you." That name, Alvin... It seemed familiar. She set her hand on top of mine and squeezed it. I pulled away quickly and gave her a warning look not to touch me again. She only smiled and nodded.

"My name is Camden," My voice gaining strength again. "Where am I?"

"Ah, Camden, I like your name." She said, kneeling next to my cell. "I am Peelah. You are on Outkast Island." My eyes widened. Outkast Island?

"You mean... Alvin the Treacherous lives here?" I asked my heart rate increasing. Peelah nodded and smiled. She seemed oddly happy for someone who lived with Alvin the Treacherous. "So... Does that mean you are the people who killed my parents?" Tears brimmed in my eyes and I quickly wiped them away. It's too soon to talk about them.

Peelah's bright smile slowly disappeared as she watched me wipe my eyes of my tears. She looked away and quietly spoke. "Yes..." She looked back at me and leaned forward, "I advised Alvin not to, that your parents' ship was only a trade ship which the markings on the sides represented peace but he did not listen to me. Pilgrit told him otherwise, though Pilgrit is always drunk!" She spoke quickly and frustratedly. "I'm sorry that Alvin has caused you pain. I cannot say for him that he is sorry, but I surely am." I could tell by the look in her eyes that she truly was sorrowful.

I reached out and touched her outstretched arm. She looked at it and then back at me. "Thank you." I said quietly. I smiled at her and she smiled back.

"Ask for Peelah to be your guide for the initiation tomorrow. They will allow you the choice of your trainer and if you wish for me, I will try to help you survive here." She said quietly. "I will be a better guardian of you than Pilgrit who is likely to be assigned to you by Alvin." There were footsteps and I saw a glow on the wall behind her. She glanced over her shoulder and gasped quietly. "I must go. Do not forget about that wish. Hide the blanket young Camden. I will see you soon." She quietly closed the door to my cell and ran off down the hall. I carefully and quietly hid the blanket in the front corner of the cell behind one of the steel bars, lay back down on the cold, rocky ground and pretended to be asleep.

I could hear the person come around, taking heavy steps. He stopped and I opened my eye partially so I could see what was going on. The man, my carrier, had returned with a torch and a wooden paddle. I didn't move, barely even breathed. He mumbled something under his breath and opened my cell.

"Git up!" He shouted. I jumped and rolled over, sitting up and putting my hands behind me. I stared at him wide eyed and blankly. He snarled, "Git up!" He shouted again. I scrambled over to the entrance of my cell and stood where he told me to. The man set the torch in a stand on the wall next to us and took the collar of my shirt in his other. I threw my hands at my shirt collar and yelped. "If you make n' single noise, I'll hit yeh again! Understood?" His voice was slurred. I nodded frantically as he raised the paddle with his other hand. I flinched as he brought the paddle down on my side and I cried out in pain.

"Ay, so ye' want more, do ya?" He said, drunkenly. He hit me again and I yelped, quieter this time.

"No! Stop, you can't scream!" I shouted at myself in my head. He raised the paddle again and I closed my eyes, trying hard to keep the tears from falling, but before he could hit me again, someone shouted.

"Pilgrit!" They said. The man holding the paddle didn't flinch. The paddle remained suspended in the air but did now descend on to my raw flesh. My eyes remained locked on his bloodshot ones. "Drop the boy." They said. By now, I recognized the voice; it was Peelah!

Pilgrit, my captor, didn't move. I remained immobilized by his grasp. "Let him down." She growled. After a tense moment of silence, he lowered me and I stumbled back into the furthest corner of my cell. I rubbed the area of my neck where Pilgrit's disgusting knuckles dug in to my skin with one hand, the other gingerly holding my paddled side. "Now, why did ye' go and do tha'?" She asked him angrily. Pilgrit turned towards her and pulled something out of his belt.

It was a small wooden, brown mug that was capped off with a metal piece from a shield. I figured the mug was full of rum, or whiskey. Whatever could make a man this drunk. He took a swig and wiped his mouth with his free arm, leaving little droplets of alcohol in his stringy beard.

"You're drunk, aren't ye'?" Peelah asked. Pilgrit turned to her with a loose smile.

"Why yes, Peelah thanks fer statin' the obvious!" He stumbled a few steps towards her. "What do you say, we get out of here and... Disturb the nadders? If ye' know what I mean..." He slurred. I gagged quietly at his words.

Peelah drew the dagger hanging by her waist and, in a split second, had Pilgrit against the wall, knife to the throat. She was smaller and quicker than he was, making it easier for her to gain on him, but Pilgrit was easily stronger and taller. Judging by the amount of armor Pilgrit wore, Peelah didn't have long before he took the upper hand.

"Git yer stoned hindquarters out of this prison er I will send you back on that boat that ye' came on a year ago to fall of the edge of the world, myself, ye' understand me?" She growled. Pilgrit huffed, nodded and turned to leave.

"I'll get this kid. He'll suffer like she did, oh, he'll get it worse

than her!" He turned towards me.

"Yer gonna face a worse fate then that stupid Luella. Yer gonna get what's comin' to both of ye'." He yelled. Pilgrit stormed off down the hall forgetting the torch an paddle, leaving no sign of peace or alliance between the two of us.

"Are ye' okay?" Peelah asked. She rushed to my open cell and held her hands out. "Do ye' mind?" She asked, gesturing to my sides. I shook my head and cautiously crawled to her. She lifted my shirt and examined my side. I heard her gasp quietly, so I looked at my side.

It was terrible. My entire right side was bruised and battered. Half was purple and the rest was black. Peelah ran her finger along the middle and I drew in a sharp breath. She drew her finger back quickly and put my shirt back down. I smiled at her.

"Don't worry, it feels better than it looks." I gave her a toothy grin and she smiled back.

"You're awful strong for a lil' boy. How old are you, Camden?" She asked, positioning her arms to hold her chin comfortably.

"I'm 14 years of age. I look like I'm only 9 though. My paw—" I stopped and swallowed. "My... Father, he.. He said that I was gonna be taller than him someday..." I trailed off. There was a moment of silence between us, only the crackling of the torch on the wall next to us.

"You sure are a strong one, aren't ye'." Peelah said. She smiled and I nodded. "Get some sleep. I'll keep an eye on ye' for tonight. You got a big day ahead of ya tomorrow." She said, pulling the blanket from the corner where it was hidden. She turned and closed the cell door and sat down in front of the bars.

"Peelah?" I spoke quietly.

"Yes Camden?"

"Am I gonna be okay?"

She hesitated. "Yes, Hun, you'll be just fine." I yawned and closed my eyes. Maybe I'll be okay for a while.

I woke up to the sound of warning bells and screams of war. Peelah had disappeared. She must have left in a scramble or she wouldn't have left her place so messy.

"Dragons!" Was the one word I could make out. I backed up in to my cell and waited for it to end but it went on for seemingly hours. I closed my eyes and leaned my head forward, letting it hang and crossing my legs. I grasped my feet with both of my hands. My shoes were still sopping wet.

Hours passed and I must have fallen asleep. When I woke up, I was thrown over the shoulder of another man, this one was nicer than Pilgrit because he didn't throw me around much. I yawned and glanced around. My hands were bound in cuffs and my feet felt heavy. They must have similar cuffs binding them too.

The man put me in another containment cage like my prison cell which was in the center of a large arena. People surrounded the arena, cheering and pounding on the old, rusty chains covering the top. I remained locked in my cell watching people mill around until I heard a few terrified gasps. I glanced to where I heard the most cheers which was near a large door above the entrance of the arena.

A large man wearing gray everything, gray fur vest and gray scaled shirt, tied together with a dark gray leather belt and a battered helmet with a horn sticking out on either side, left or right, of his head. He had a large, brown, braided beard that hung just above the dark gray belt. He waved his hands around in the air, antagonizing the crowd.

"Alright then! Welcome to today's initiation." He shouted to the crowd. He sounded like a very British Viking. It was the man with the gruff voice. The one that I assumed was scary, and boy, was I right. "I," he placed his hand over his chest, "Alvin the Treacherous," I stumbled back and fell down, landing on my hands, scraping the palms against the rock floor. I hit the door of my cage and caused a huge lock hanging from outside the cage to clatter on the metal bars. Alvin glared at me and the room went silent. "Well, seeing 'as I've already been interrupted once, we might as well begin!" He grumbled, angrily sitting in a chair next to the entryway of the arena.

A man stepped up to the arena, next to Alvin, holding a parchment. "Name?" He asked. I looked around for a moment, wondering if he meant anyone else but me. There was a cough somewhere in the audience. "Ahem." He cleared his throat. "Name?" He said for a second time, clearly annoyed.

Alvin leaned over to one of the people to his right and whispered something. "Not really the sharpest sword in the barrel, is he?" I glowered at him and turned to the man addressing me.

"My name is Camden," there was a moment of silence except for the man scribbling something down on the paper. "What's yours?" I asked innocently. The man looked up from his parchment, bewildered that I had made any form of social contact with him, let alone anyone. He glanced at Alvin who remained un-phased and turned back to me.

"Ah, that's not important..." He mumbled. "Age?"

"14 and counting sir." I said proudly. I looked around the arena, trying to spot Peelah or Pilgrit but I couldn't find them.

"Why are you here, kid?"

I hesitated. "Because... He killed my parents." I pointed at Alvin and offered an I-hate-you-and-I'll-get-you-for-this stare, directly at his cold eyes. He glared at me as people in the crowd murmured and grumbled impatiently.

"Let's test some of your skills..." The man said, breaking the tension. He walked over a ways to a series of levers and pulleys, pulling one down. A door nearby opened and my cage door lowered in to the rock beneath me. I cautiously walked out of the cage and examined my surroundings. There wasn't much but a few doors and some training tools. I made my way to the tools and heard a small 'click' noise

from behind me. I quickly reached for the dagger that had been discarded on the floor and spun it around in my palms.

I looked down and saw familiar markings. I thought of all the places I could have seen it until my thought process was interrupted by a small dragon circling me.

It eyed me carefully, noting my every movement. I breathed shallowly, quickly, fear taking over. I racked my brain for it's name, small and green, big eyes. He hopped around in front of me, one eye facing a completely different direction than the other one. He has a playful nature...

"Ter..." I spoke quietly. "Terrible.. Terrible Terror!" I exclaimed happily. The Terror must have been happy too so it lunged at me. I ducked but wasn't fast enough. The Terror knocked me down, making me drop my dagger and stood on my chest. "Wow!" I grunted, "For a little guy, you sure are-" I huffed, "heavy!" I huffed again. The Terror leaned over my face. The crowd was silent and I noticed that Alvin was leaning forward in his chair. We made eye contact for a split second and I felt my anxiety levels rise.

I redirected my attention to the Terrible Terror that was tramping all over my torso and sniffing my face. Why hasn't it killed me yet? Dragons always go for the kill if they get the chance I thought. Maybe that's not so true? Alvin huffed and I rolled my eyes.

"Bring the Monstrous Nightmare!" Someone shouted from the crowd. The voice was slurred. Pilgrit. I scowled and slowly raised my arms to the Terrors sides. It didn't seem to care that I was picking it off of me. I set him next to me, sat, and picked my dagger back up. Alvin grinned evilly as I scanned the crowd, finding Pilgrit and glaring at him.

"That sounds like a great idea!" Alvin shouted. "Open the gate!" He pointed to the heavily guarded cage with many metal bars and a thick metal rod locking the bars in to the ground. A few Outcasts outside the arena pulled levers and ropes, raising the rod and opening the gate. The Terror cowered behind me.

People pointed at murmured about the little dragon cowering in my shadow. Why hadn't it returned to its cage? Wouldn't it think to be safer there? I listened to what everyone was saying about me. The kids got voodoo! The boy has magic! He's a god!

A fiery ball burst from the hole where the bars and rod used to be. Sharp teeth appeared before the spectators near Alvin and some got a taste of molten rock that flew from the Nightmares mouth, burning through the rusted chains on top of the arena.

I tightened my stance and held the dagger at my side with one hand, one foot behind me the other foot in front, ready to run. The Nightmare peeled itself from the wall and stood in front of me, head on. I bounced lightly, ready to run or jump at any given moment. The Nightmare stood before me, breathing in my face, stretching its wings. It must have been in there for a long time.

I twirled the dagger behind my back slowly and thought back to dragon training back at home. I had never faced a Monstrous Nightmare before but I had faced other dragons, like Nadders and Gronkles, though no

dragon I had ever faced went after me like it did the other Viking kids.

The Nightmare snapped at me and I jumped out of the way just in time. It picked up the board of weapons in its teeth, clamping its teeth, splintering wood everywhere. A board from the holder hit my bruised side and I cried out in pain, falling to my knees. The Nightmare whipped its head back around, weapons flying from his mouth. I breathed heavily, stood and held my stance. The dragon slowly made its way towards me, letting weapons drop from its mouth. I stood still, waiting. The dagger I held was warm in my hands. Alvin grunted and I shifted the dagger from my right hand, to my left hand and then back to my right.

The dragon stopped. Standing in front of me was the Terrible Terror, hissing and firing small fireballs towards the Nightmare. People gasped outside the arena and I stood, jaw dropped, confused. Alvin leaned forward in his chair, the wood creaking, silencing the crowd. I slowly brought my dagger down and hid it in my brown, fur vest. The Nightmare stared at the Terror and stared at me for a moment. It then did something that I had never, ever, seen a dragon do.

It retreated to its cage without furthering our battle. The crowd gasped and then was silent. Alvin even gasped. I stood, unsure of what just happened, staring at the Terror. He sat in front of me, awaiting a command and when I didn't command it, he lunged at me. I screamed and ducked but the Terror didn't knock me over or even hurt me. It crawled on my shoulders, lay down and closed its eyes. Its tail wrapped loosely around my head, I listened to him breathe.

"You... What's your name?" Alvin shouted. The Terror jumped slightly and repositioned itself. I turned around slowly, cautiously, to look at Alvin.

"I'm Camden. I am 14 years old." I said my voice cracking. The Terror on my shoulders flicked its tongue and snored. It fell asleep already?

"You single handedly... trained... a dragon?" He asked me, confused. I looked at him as innocently as I could. He leaned back in his chair and rubbed his forehead with his hand. "Take him to the choosing room." He said to his firsthand. The man pointed at the door to the arena and I turned. "Leave the dragon!" Alvin hollered. The spectators quickly fled to this choosing hall and I walked slowly to the door of the arena where two men tore the Terror from my shoulders.

"No, be careful with him!" I called to them, reaching after the poor, frightened Terror who had just woken up. I'd really grown comfortable with his presence on my shoulders, listening to his steady breathing, feeling his chest rise and fall against my neck. I felt like there was nothing wrong with him there on my shoulders. "Wait!" I shouted, running after the men. They stopped and turned, tightly gripping the Terror. I ran to the dragon and held out my hand to its nose, whispering to him, "Be calm. I'll be back." I said it quietly so that the men wouldn't hear what I'd said, and then ran back to the arena entrance. I looked back and boy what a big mistake that was.

The dragon and I made eye contact and from that moment, I knew my

life wouldn't be the same. He and I now shared a bond, one that wouldn't be broken. I'd get back here, I don't know how, but I will and I will free these dragons.

A man tied my hands together, led me to this so called "choosing hall" and pushed me through the doors. People lined the walls, sat at tables and stood in groups. Some people ate mutton while others ate fish. All of them were staring at me though. Some people glared, others smiled and some didn't care. I stood for a moment taking in all that was going on, looking around the room until someone pushed my back forward and I stumbled through the hall until we reached large doors on the other side of the mess hall where three men stood guard. One of the men nodded to another behind me and pointed at one of the other guards and they turned to open the doors.

I stumbled in to the room, the guards closing the door behind me. The guards who originally brought me here were gone and I was alone in the room. I moved slowly forward towards the end hall. Dim torches were lit and hung up on the walls. Slowly and quietly, I crept along the walkway. I was stopped by a small ledge that, because of my bounds and chains, I couldn't step up.

4 figures stepped out in a line before me. The light was too dim for me to see who they were. A booming voice called out from the dimness: "Ay! Light the torches again, will ye?" It was Alvin. I glanced up to where I thought the voice came from and saw him, hunched over in a dragon skin throne. The light grew brighter slowly, until finally I was able to make out the faces of those who lined up before me. "Kid, you're going to pick someone to train you. Normally I would pick for you but what you just showed me in the ring, I'll say was impressive." I looked at him, a blank expression on my face, and remained silent. Minutes passed before anyone said anything. I looked around at my choices of caretakers. Of course none of them would be like my parents but, I need someone to help me survive.

"Well?" Alvin shouted. I looked at my options. On the right was a man with a skinny, white beard. He was old, had wild hair and crazy looking eyes. He leaned on a curvy, highly decorated stick and wore dragon's claws on his feet. I decided to stray away from him.

Next to him was a young man, less scrawny. He was taller than me but not by much. He wore a fur vest and looked sane. That is until he took off his Viking hat and tried putting it back on. A woman came out from a door at the side of the ledge and helped him put his hat back on. Not him!

Next to him was a familiar face, not one that I liked. He grinned slyly at me and lowered his brow. I glared at him and moved on. Not Pilgrit.

Finally, next to Pilgrit, was a kind face that I recognized and was learning to enjoy on this terrifying island. It was Peelah. She smiled at me and I smiled back. I lifted my chained hands and pointed at her. Guards came from the doors behind me and unbound my hands and feet. I jumped the little ledge and ran up to her, then faced Alvin.

"Ah, a motherly figure, eh? Miss your mom now, do ya?" Alvin asked, jokingly. I clenched my fists and fought back tears, then unclenched my fists and took a deep breath. Alvin saw my discomfort and grinned.

"You start training in three days. Till then, make yourself at home. But I wouldn't get too comfortable, lad. A scrawny thing like you won't last long here on Outcast Island." He laughed and coughed, then corrected himself, "Git out of 'ere!"

Peelah led me to a door and we left the great hall through a back entrance. I followed her down some cliffside passages that looked as though they needed to be fixed. I tripped over a loose plank and fell on my elbows, scraping them and getting a few splinters. Older men chuckled and laughed as they did their jobs, walking past us.

We came in to a large clear area with a small, and by small I mean small, well in the center. A few people stood around with glum looks on their faces, standing in front of and behind carts with and without yaks tied to them. "Mutton for sale, come get yer mutton!" One man shouted glumly. "Fresh yak's milk!" Another one said. Peelah strolled past them and I followed not wanting to get lost. We reached the edge of town. There were fewer houses here. Each house was lined up in a circle around a small center circle made of random cobblestones.

Each house was the same. Brown slanted roof that comes all the way down to the dirt of the ground, few windows if any at all, a large door with a dragon stabbed through the chest hanging from the roof. There were two children that were kicking a ball and forth. When they saw me with Peelah, they retreated behind the roof of a house off to the right. We walked up to the last house and I turned my head to see the kids quickly closing the door to a bland home.

The last house was different. There were colors, everywhere. There were things hanging from the door handle, the roof, even the dragon. The weird thing about the dragon was that it was painted to look like a Monstrous Nightmare, only, it looked happy.

"Like it?" Peelah asked. I nodded and looked at the house, admiring its difference in colors, everything. It wasn't like the rest. She opened the door and held it open for me as I walked inside. "Welcome to your new home Camden!" She clapped as the door shut behind her.

Inside looked normal. There was a fire pit in the center to warm the house, some cooking utensils neatly stacked on a log nearby, some workbenches off in a corner and a back door behind a set of log stairs. A large chest sat beneath the steps which I assumed was full of more cooking supplies or other needs.

"Your room is upstairs." I looked at her and she gestured to the staircase. She took off the helmet she was wearing and set it next to the fire pit. I started up the stairs and she followed. At the top of the stairs was a small empty space and a wall with two doors. I hadn't realized you could fit a wall up here. We couldn't back home. "I always keep a spare room in case we have company. You're the first for us." She pointed to the door on the right, farthest from the top of the stairs. "That room is yours." I walked to the door and pushed on the wood. The door creaked open to reveal a small room with a small bed made of wood and a feather pillow as well as a blanket like the one she'd given me in my prison cell, a desk next to it, a small bucket and a window.

I smiled. "I've never had a window before." I ran to it and looked

out. Despite the fact Outkast island was basically treeless and barren rock, it had a charming view of the sunset over the ocean. I gasped and whipped my head back around to Peelah. "Thank you, Peelah." I ran up to her and wrapped my arms around my waist, all I could reach since she was much taller than I was. She hesitated, then wrapped her arms around my shoulder, resting her chin on the top of my head.

"You're welcome, Camden." We stayed like that for a few minutes, enjoying each other's company. "I know... I know that it's hard for you, losing your parents. I know what that's like..." She stated.

"You do?" I asked. She swallowed and sighed.

"I do. But that's a story for another time." I nodded. She pulled back and set her hands on my shoulders, kneeling down. "I just want you to know that I'll never want to replace your parents. I can't do that. I am only here to protect you in their honor. I'm sure they were wonderful people, Camden." I felt tears forming in my eyes as we talked about my family. I nodded at everything she said.

"Okay?"

"Okay." I wrapped my arms around her neck and hugged her again. "Thank you, Peelah."

"Don't mention it, Camden."

"I have a question." I asked, pulling out of the embrace and sitting on the edge of my bed. Peelah nodded and I continued. "You were saying 'we' and 'us' earlier. Who is this other person?" She smiled and laughed aloud.

"You'll meet him soon enough." She turned towards my door to leave but hesitated, "One more thing, supper is soon and we have a lot to talk about. First things first, do not enter my room next door until I give you permission to do so, okay?" I nodded. "At supper, we must talk about your training."

"My training?"

"Yes, training. I'll tell you more at supper, but for now, I have to go get it ready. I'll call you down soon, alright Cam? Can I call you Cam or just Camden?" I nodded in agreement. "Cam it is then." And she left, closing the door behind her.

I sat for a moment, taking in the look of my new room. On the wall separating Peelah's room with my own, there was nothing but logs. In the lower left corner, the one closest to the door, there was a small hole, barely big enough for a mouse to get through. I made a mental note of it. I stood and moved slowly to the desk, running my fingers along the frame of my bed.

There were three drawers in the desk, all along the bottom. I opened one at a time. The one to the left had some pencils in it along with a furry thing stuck to rope. A keychain. I opened the second drawer to find an empty notebook. I took it out and set it on top of the desk for later. In the last drawer there was nothing, at least, not at first. I reached my hand in to the drawer and didn't feel anything. I figured it was just an empty drawer until I ran my hand

along the wall of the drawer. I found a torn corner of something stuck to the side. I pulled at it and knelt down to look inside. I picked and pulled at the small corner until it finally peeled. There was a small thud from underneath the desk and I looked down. A secret compartment in the bottom of the desk and sitting on the ground, dropped from that compartment, was another notebook.

I bent over and picked up the notebook, fingering through the pages one by one. They were chalk full of information! All the known information on all the dragons that we know of. I smiled and skipped to the third page where there was a note from whoever wrote it.

"Dear Reader,

I have risked my life many a time to find out all I could about Dragons. You see them now as vicious, angry, and hostile when in reality; we've been going about this all wrong.

This field journal is all about my findings with dragons and training them. That's right, training them." I gasped quietly. "Dragons aren't at all what they seem. This journal is about all the dragons you can find on islands nearby as well as right here. Be warned, secrets kept here must remain secret. The consequences of them heard by others untrustworthy is great." I heard footsteps coming up the stairs and I quickly tucked the notebook beneath my pillow and stood in front of my desk, opening the notebook and trying to pull out a pencil from the drawer at the left.

Peelah knocked and opened the door quietly. "Ah, so I see you have seen your desk, hmm? Do you like it? I made it myself!" She said proudly. I nodded and smiled.

"It's a very nice desk. How long have you had it?" I asked.

"Ah, I dunno. I built it quite some time agoâ€| maybe when I was your age. I was quite the hiccup back then. Anyways, supper is set, come eat." She backed out of the room and I set the pencil in the open, empty notebook on the desk. I pulled on the door handle, glancing back at the bed before shutting the door and making my way down the staircase.

Peelah greeted me and asked how much I wanted to eat. I shrugged and she handed me a wooden plate full of mutton. I nodded in thanks and sat on the ground next to the fire.

"Training." Peelah stated. I looked at her and took a bite of mutton. "Alvin will be expecting you to show up at the Arena in three days. In three days from now, you will be tested of your skill." She took a bite of mutton and chewed quietly. She swallowed and continued. "If you're going to survive here on Outkast island, you're going to have to learn how to fight. I will teach you how to fight like an assassin." I looked up at her in confusion, chewing on a piece of mutton. "An assassin is a silent killer, trained to take out enemies without them knowing they're from the opposite army." I noticed that how Peelah was talking was different. There was an almost... high and mighty dialect. Her vowels were tall and long. She caught me staring and frowned. "What?" I shrugged and swallowed.

"Your accent." I stated. "It's different from all the other

vikings."

"Thats something you'll learn about soon. Anyways, I will be training you. I can teach you all you need to know in three days. You need to listen to me, okay Camden? Outcasts on this island will not be lenient with you. There will be many challenges you'll face from here on out." She finished her mutton and set her plate on the counter next to the fire. "Meet me out back when you have finished. We'll start training right away." She walked out without another word. On her way out, she picked up an empty bucket painted green with leaf pigment.

I finished my mutton and set my plate next to Peelah's beside the fire pit. Instead of going to the back immediately, I sat down and looked around. I thought about how just last night I was trying to sleep on the cold, hard stone ground of a prison cell, getting picked up and beaten in the side and then rescued by Peelah. I sat up straight, pulled off my vest and lifted the right side of my shirt up to my shoulder to examine the bruise.

It was still purple and big. Black around the edges and veiny in the middle. I lifted my hand and let it hover over my bruise, then, taking my index finger, gently pressing on it. I drew in a sharp breath at the pain that shot through my veiny side. I lifted my finger and felt, the pain slowly lift away from my side. I breathed out slowly and let my shirt fall, slouching as I did so.

I looked around, taking deep breaths, putting my vest back on and admired my surroundings. The colors on the walls were so much more welcoming than the cold rock wall cells of the prison. Things were moving so fast. I was already starting training in a matter of minutes. How was Peelah going to train me if she can't even get Alvin to listen to her?

I stood and made my way to the door in the back, lightly taking and pulling the handle to open the door. There was a staircase that led a short distance beneath the ground. I always thought caves were natural, but I was surprised to see a room carved out of rock and dirt. Rimming the room was green. Plants and trees growing everywhere. There was a few torches here and there, a safe distance from the foliage. In the center of the room was a wall of green and purple flowers. I walked through the maze of greenery, gently touching leaves hanging over the side of wooden shelves.

"Do you like them?" Peelah asked from behind the wall. She pushed aside some plants and peered through a small hole she'd made. I looked at her green eyes and nodded, excitedly. "Come with me." She smiled and turned around, walking towards another wall of green. I walked around the center wall to where Peelah was and watched as she pushed aside the wall. There was a door behind the wall of plants. "I built this place all on my own without any help from anyone. No one questions me with my paints. I know I shouldn't but I give certain... spark, to the island. You know? A good one." She smiled and opened the door.

Inside was a small round room with dirt walls and a rock floor. Next to the door was a rack of weapons. I sauntered in behind Peelah and watched as she turned to the weapon rack to pick up a dagger.

"Did you take that dagger with you from the Arena?" She asked. I

nodded and fumbled for it in my belt beneath my vest. When I finally pulled it out, I looked at the hilt and at Peelah's. They were identical. "You see Camden, these daggers are very special. They allow you and me to communicate in certain ways."

"How?"

"Not you and me; Dragons." She turned to the rack of weapons and pushed it aside, revealing a rock bowl with crushed paint in it. She drew on the wall a dragon figure and a viking holding something that looked like a dagger. "The symbols on the hilt of your dagger here appeal to the dragons, causing them to be less hostile. They will think that you are a friend. You know how in the ring today the Nightmare retreated to its cage?" I nodded. "That was all thanks to your dagger. The Nightmare sensed the danger you and it would have been in if it had attacked you or let you gain its trust, so for the benefit of you both, it left." I took note that her dialect varied between Viking and the other one. "Do you have that notebook that was sitting out on your desk earlier?" I shook my head and she sighed, pulling one off from the weapons rack. She tossed it to me as well as a pencil and pointed at the notebook with the end of her paint brush, "Write anything important in this book. Everything. You're going to need it in the near future." I nodded and copied the picture she'd drawn on the wall a few pages in.

"Just to let you know, Camden, tonight is about history. Tomorrow will be about combat, the next day about tactics and strategy, and the final day how to use a weapon." I nodded and she stared at me. "Let's continue."

Peelah told me about the history of the island of Outkasts. How it wasn't all that old, that we were frequently attacked by dragons, how Alvin became the leader of the Outkasts and his banishment from the island of Berk.

"Stoick, the current chief of Berk, banished him long, long ago. Before my time, even. Since then, Alvin has been planning revenge on the Hooligan tribe. I, of course, am against it." Her high and mighty dialect had returned. "You know Pilgrit? Of course you do, don't answer that." She paced about the room and shrugged. "He was banished from Berk, just like Alvin, only he was banished for worse reasons. He beat his own child. Of course, he disowned her the night he was banished and continues to get drunker and drunker by the hour." her viking accent was back. She was getting frustrated just talking about him, it was easy to tell. I don't like Pilgrit much either, so I know where she's coming from. "Speaking of which, how is your side?" She asked setting the paint bowl down and kneeling in front of me.

"It's bad..." I said, quietly.

"May I?" Peelah asked, pointing towards my bruised side. I nodded and took my vest off, proceeding to lift my shirt up, revealing the black rimmed, purple bruise. Peelah gasped and I winced. "Gee, Camden, this looks really bad. Let's take you to the island shaman."

"What about the lesson?" I asked, eager to learn.

"We can finish it when we get back."

We left the house, Peelah pushing the wall of flowers in front of the

training room door before going. She handed me a map of the island and told me to find the shaman's house for her.

"I'm much too old to be looking at maps. My eyesight is a bit crummy." She said sarcastically. She looked at me and smiled as I laughed quietly. "There is a map of just the village on the back of the island map." She took the map from my hands, turning it over and handing it back to me. There were labels written in dragon script, floating next to the hand drawn buildings.

I scanned the map, reading the script in search of the word 'Shaman'. I ran my finger along the paper until I finally found it. I started walking and Peelah followed me, turning corners and walking past glum looking people as well as glum houses.

It took us a long time to finally reaching the shaman's house, and when we did, she was sitting outside her home in a little chair, made of dragon's bones. When she saw us, she smiled and stood, leaning on a small wooden, decorated cane that I hadn't noticed before. Peelah lifted her arm and waved to the shaman as we walked up the small stairs to her porch.

Just like Peelah's house, the shaman's house was colorful and highly decorated. There were dragons painted on the walls and the head of a Terrible Terror like the one I'd faced in the Arena hanging from the door handle.

"Please, come in." The shaman said. Her voice was quiet and shaky, much like an old woman's should be. I stepped up to the door and opened it, holding it open for Peelah and the shaman. Peelah nodded to me and I smiled. The shaman hobbled past me, reaching up to pat my face as she did so. She was a lot shorter than me.

I followed her inside and through a small curtain, in to a room filled with shelves and a wall of chests. The shelves were filled with homemade trinkets and jars of jelly and pickled things. On the floor were three pads made of feathers. Peelah and the shaman were sitting on two of them and Peelah gestured for me to sit on the cousin next to them. I made my way over, marveling at everything around me.

"Camden, this is shaman Viri. The little kids call her ViVi. ViVi, this is Camden." ViVi held out her small, bony hand for me to shake. I took it, gingerly, and shook her hand. ViVi looked back at Peelah and I studied them. Did they know each other from somewhere else?

"Pilgrit beat him last night." Peelah said, annoyed. ViVi spat and cringed.

"Next time that man saunters through my door, I will make him a remedy that will be poison, should he ever beat another child."

"I can help with that." Peelah said, playfully. They laughed and I smiled. Peelah looked at me and pointed to my side. "Show her what he did to you." I nodded and turned slightly, lifting my shirt for the fourth time today.

ViVi gasped quietly and I winced again. She moved closer to me and let her small, bony finger hover over my bruise. Unexpectedly, she

jabbed her finger at it and I jumped back from her, crying out in pain. I let my shirt fall and held my breath, feeling tears begin to well. I swallowed, fought back the tears and breathed out.

"I should curse that man." ViVi said. "I'm terribly sorry Camden." She struggled to stand, and when she finally stood, she hobbled over to a chest in the back corner. She pulled out something dark from the chest and turned back to us, letting the roof of the chest slam shut behind her, without flinching.

ViVi handed the dark thing to me. It was a rock. Smooth, flat and cold. Very cold.

"What's this?" I asked.

"Put that on your side tonight when you go to sleep. Make sure it stays there all night. By morning, the powers of the rock will have absorbed your injury and you will be cured." I stared at her, holding the rock in my hand and said nothing.

"Thank you, ViVi." Peelah said for me. She stood and went to give ViVi a hug while I remained sitting on my pillow.

We said our goodbyes and I led the way back to the house.

"How long have you known ViVi?" I asked Peelah. We walked past the Arena, back on to the cliff walkways.

"I don't know... For as long as I can remember I guess. Like you, I came here without any other options aside from death." The sun was slowly setting on the edge of the world. It seemed closer than usual. "I had nowhere to go. No family, no friends. Just myself and that dagger of yours." I pulled up part of my shirt revealing the decorated hilt of the dagger and set my hand on it, gently. "ViVi was to me as I am to you. Caretaker extraordinaire, as we like to say." She smiled and looked at the ground.

"Peelah, wait." We stopped and I jumped, wrapping my arms around her neck. "Thank you, again, for all you are doing for me. I don't know how I can ever repay you." She returned the hug and I dug my face in to her shoulder.

"You don't have to. You're giving me the opportunity to give back to the world. To repay Odin for giving me a place to go when I had no one." She whispered in to my ear.

"I miss them, Peelah."

"Me too, kid. Me too."

We eventually made it back to the house where we continued my history lesson. Hours passed it seemed before Peelah finally sent me to bed.

"I want you to have that map I gave you memorized in two days' time. It'll do you well for what Alvin has in store for you." I nodded and gave her a hug before leaving the training room and up the stairs out of the lower level of the house. I made my way up to my new room, laid down in my bed and pulled the notebook out from beneath my pillow.

Flipping through the pages, I skimmed through some of the readings and found nothing that I didn't already know. The journal was only another book of Dragons. I frustratedly threw the book on to the desk next to my bed and huffed in anger. I rolled over in my bed and stared at the wall. I could hear the hearth crackling downstairs.

The sound slowly dissipated and Peelah had come upstairs. I heard her door shut and a few moments later, the distant smell of smoke from a candle. Overhead, I heard some pleas for help and the sound of a dragon's roar.

I closed my eyes and listened to the cries of the dragons as well as the screaming kids. The sound of the fire burning and then, silence. Everything was absolutely quiet.

I opened my eyes to find myself on my parents' boat. My heart started racing, my breathing becoming heavy. Could it be that I'm dreaming?

I pinched myself and felt a faint, sharp pain in my arm. I was awake, I think. I stood from my bed and walked to the door.

My hand hovered by the handle. I slowly, carefully, gripped the rope handle of the door and took a deep breath. Just as I was about to pull the door open, I heard shouts and cries for help. Grimacing, I opened the door.

I emerged in to pure chaos.

Dragons were attacking the ship, a Deadly Nadder balancing on top of the mast, firing magnesium blasts at crew members and in to the water. The boat rocked from left to right, throwing me to the side of the ship.

The sky above me was cloudless and blue, yet the water below was blood red. A green dragon, long neck with a large chin-like thing hanging off its mouth, emerged from the bloody depths below.

"Scauldron!" Someone shouted. The scauldron slithered around the hull of the boat and made it to the deck, facing me. Ocean spray misted my face as I stared, wide eyed, blankly, at the massive dragon.

The dragon seemed to have almost smiled before whipping its head around to the steering wheel where stood my father. I gasped and my throat dried, almost instantly. I tried to call out, but only made a small croak.

There stood my father alongside my mother, looking at me, then to the dragon. My mother had the same distant look she'd had the last time I had seen her when I thought she'd been dead. My father looked scared, yet... brave. He held my mother strongly and proudly.

He looked at me and mouthed, "I love you." Before the dragon stroke, gobbling them up in one piece. I screamed in horror, attracting attention to myself from the dragon.

I was angry. I was sad. I was frustrated. I am powerless. I am angry

because I was powerless to save my parents from death for a possible second time. The dragon swayed slowly, waiting for the perfect time to attack. Hanging from its sharp teeth was a scrap of my mother's tan fur vest. I stared at it, holding back tears.

The boat lurched to the right and I was swept off my feet and the dragon stood before me, curling its tail around the mast that the Nadder had previously stood on. I scrambled to my feet and stared, dead in the face, at the massive Scauldron. It made a strange gurgling noise deep in its throat before baring its insanely sharp teeth.

"For my parents." I whispered to myself. I picked up the closest thing to a mace that I could find and hurled it at the dragon's face. At that moment, the dragon shot boiling hot water in to my face, burning my skin and causing everything to go dark, and silent.

[To Be Continued...]

4. Camden (Part II)

Camden (Part II)

"Camden?" My eyes flew open and I jerked forwards, sitting in my bed. I was drenched with warm water and dripping on to the blankets. I shook my head, then set my head in my hands and cried.

Peelah wrapped her arms around me and I leaned in to her warmth. We sat in silence until I managed to calm down.

"Hey. What happened, Hun?" She asked quietly. I raised my head from my hands and Peelah released me from the embrace. I shook violently sitting in my bed. Peelah stood and ran out of the room in to the room next door, grabbing a blanket, coming back and draping it over my shoulder.

I sighed and nodded in thanks. I breathed in deeply and let all of the air out.

"It was my parents..." I choked, "They- I woke up on their boat and... I walked to the door where I heard screaming and cries for help... I walked outside and the boat was being attacked by dragons and- " I choked down a sob, "A big, green dragon..."

"A Scauldron..?" I nodded.

"It attacked the boat and.. It just... ate them. Just like that... and I watched them die again. I miss them so much, Peelah." I sobbed. I threw my arms around her shoulders and cried in to her shirt.

"I know, honey, I know." She whispered and drew little circles in my back as I sobbed. After a few minutes, I calmed down and lay back on my bed. "Will you be okay?" She asked.

I nodded and held out my arms. She leaned over and kissed my forehead, like my mom used to do. I choked down another sob and hugged her.

"After breakfast tomorrow, meet me in the training room. How is your

side?" I nodded and lifted my shirt. The rock was lost somewhere in my blankets but my side looked as though it were clearing up. It wasn't as blue as it was the night before. "Good, good. Okay, I'm going to go back to sleep. You're welcome to come in there and sleep if it will make you feel better." She smiled, genuinely, and shut the door as she walked out.

I fell asleep a short while later but dreamt of nothing.

When I woke up, it still wasn't light out. I looked out the window to see the sun resting barely below the horizon, peeking out atop the waves by the Edge of the World.

I sat up, throwing my feet over the edge of my bed and rubbed my eyes. I stood and stretched my arms and snuck downstairs for a new set of clothing to wear. I'd found a grey shirt and a bronze strip of cloth that I could use as a belt. I went back up to my room, changed, threw the other set of dirty clothes beneath the desk next to my bed and looked on top where the notebook was. I furrowed my brow and reached for it.

Sticking out from one of the corners was a piece of folded paper. I gingerly plucked at it until finally, the books back cover ripped and let the contents of the secret packet fell out on to the desk top.

I started with the folded paper. I unfolded it carefully to find a map. In one of the corners was a compass rose and in another, a map of Outkast Island. They were drawn in dark black ink. Throughout the rest of the map were black, faded spots that must have been some other islands. There were also stains of some sort... Rum, maybe? I leaned a little closer to see if I could make out some of the smudged pictures, but I had no luck.

I set the map down and picked up a flat envelope. I opened it as well and pulled out its contents.

Inside was another folded piece of paper. It was a letter.

It read:

Dear you,

The key enclosed in this secret section of my notebook is the key to something big. It unlocks a chest of knowledge greater than you could ever imagine.

Guard it with your life.

P.H.

"That was a simple statement..." I said aloud, quietly. I set the letter down, unfolded atop its envelope. Placed on the table was a small key, rusted and dangling from a small rope to make it look like a necklace. I picked it up and rubbed it between my fingers, wiping some of the rust and grime away. It was a bronze key, but now its dirt.

I sighed and piled the contents of the compartment neatly at the center of my desk. I stood over it, putting my palms flat on the table and leaned over the map and letter. I took the key and

struggled to put the rope over my head and around my neck.

It rested just below my mom's necklace, a Dragon tooth, from the legendary BoneKnapper dragon, a mythical Dragon that little was known about. I sighed again and opened a drawer, taking the papers and gingerly stuffing them in to the backmost part of the drawer.

The sun, slowly rising, was now over the horizon. I looked out the window and heard the calls of the market down the paths. People were waking up now.

I heard thumps from the room next door so I assumed that Peelah was awake. I stared out the window until I heard her door open. I grabbed my vest, threw it over my shoulders, and then I went to my door and proceeded to go downstairs.

"Ay, Camden, how are ye'?" Peelah asked, holding a pot over the now steady fire. Her common accent was showing rather than her high and mighty one.

"I'm okay." I said, "How about you?"

"I'm okay." She sighed, "You ready for training today?" I nodded while she glanced up at me from the pot. "Today is all about fighting n' strategy to it! You boys love this kind of stuff, don't ye'?" She asked. I smiled and nodded again. Peelah smiled as well and looked back down at the pot. "Breakfast is almost done. Why don't you go set up the training room for me? We'll be able to get to the lessons faster if we don't have to waste time settin' up!" I nodded and turned to the door, making my way down the steps and past the greens.

I pushed the wall of plants out of the way of the secret door and opened it, walking in to dimly burning torches. Taking one that was fully lit, I circled around the room, lighting each torch as I went.

Something about the circular room felt off. I felt like someone was watching me.

I pushed the feeling aside and walked back to the place where I'd first gotten the torch to light the others, placing it back on the wall. Walking around to the wall of weapons, I felt the strange feeling of eyes on me. The hairs on the back of my neck stood on end, and I knew something was up.

I crept towards the weapons rack, drawing my dagger out from its spot between my belt and vest, holding it with both hands in front of me. My boots making little noise on the rocky ground below, I figured that I had the upper hand, sneaking up on my opponent.

Gee, was I more wrong.

From my left, something jumped out at me from behind a panel of weapons, smothering my face and making me drop my weapon. I squirmed and figured, "its Pilgrit, I'm going to die!" I was too caught up in the moment, trying to free myself, that I didn't hear the laugh of Peelah or even see her walk in.

"Ay, Ev, that'll do." She said, laughing. The person who held me set

me down and I dropped to my knees to get my dagger, spinning on my heels and thrusting the sharp end outwards, towards the menace.

Both Peelah and the man laughed. "Ay, son, calm down!" The man said. He put his hands up as Peelah walked towards us, setting her hand on his shoulder.

"Camden, this is Everett. He is one of my best friends, as he wishes though we were something more." She smirked at Everett and moved towards me. I lowered my weapon slowly and went ahead to put it back between my belt. Everett patted me on the back and laughed a haughty laugh.

"If only she'd give me the time of day!" He said. His voice was deep, but not gruff or threatening. Should he use a different tone, maybe he'd be scary, but right now, he was about as scary as that Terrible Terror I faced in the ring. "We've known each other for quite some time, haven't we, Peelah?"

"Ay, a long, long time." Peelah looked at the ground and smiled, then looked at me. "Story time, I think." She sat me down and Everett sat behind me, leaning forward like a toddler would, eager for a treat. Peelah laughed. "Camden, I'm going to tell you a bit more about myself and my friendship with Everett before we get to your training today." I nodded and leaned my back against the cold wall.

"When I was your age, no, I was about twelve; my parents and I were taken hostage by Alvin and his outcasts. I was too young to be in Dragon Training, so instead of me, they put in my parents. At the time, my mum was expecting. Fighting dragons was harder for her then it was for my father, who spent most of his life protecting our village, and my mum. Well..." She sighed, "Alvin had me stay by him during the test of their skills and... Well, my father, burly and strong as he was, couldn't fight for the both of them..." Her smile had faded by now and her eyes looked sad. I couldn't help but feel sad too. "By the end of the match, the Dragon who'd taken my father's life stood triumphant over my mum. The outcasts went ahead and attacked the Dragon and forced him back in to his cage.

"My mum, she was hurt very badly. They took her to the infirmary where I stayed with her for three days before finally..." She swallowed, hard. "She died and so did my baby brother or sister." I could see tears welling in her eyes but Peelah was fighting hard for them not to fall. She looked away. "Both of my parents, killed right before my eyes. It's a terrible burden to carry on your shoulders. There's never anything you can do about it, except of course avenging them, but how can you do that when you're powerless?" I nodded and looked at the floor.

"I had to pick someone to raise me as well, just like you did, Camden. My new family was nice to me, and that's how I'll try to be to you. They gave me a home, food, and the boys I lived with trained me to be a fighter. I was the best fighter they had during those early years, even better than my teachers," she said proudly. She turned to me and whispered, "But don't tell them I told you that!" She winked and I smiled. The tears that had welled in her eyes just moments before had gone and were replaced by a light.

"Growing up was hard. I didn't know many people, and everyone who did know me didn't talk to me much. I was awful shy. After Dragon

Training class every day, I'd go to the other side of the island to the rock spires shooting from the ground and map the areas of the island few people had seen. I was a lonely kid." I leaned forward.

"This doesn't explain how you got to know Everett though... How did you two meet?" I interrupted.

"Ay, I was getting to that Camden." Everett pat me on the back again, only this time he left his hand there. I shrugged him off and scooted away slightly, clutching my shoulders with my hands. "Everett, He's a bit particular when it comes to contact," Peelah whispered. "Any who, Everett had been our neighbors. The boys were very fond of him, though, I was a bit scared to introduce myself. When I finally did, I was extremely glad I'd done so because we'd become close friends over the next year or so.

"This is the part you have to promise me you will never, ever, tell another soul, okay Camden?" I looked at her with wide eyes and nodded vigorously. She breathed deeply and sighed, like she were about to perform an act of pristine skill and accuracy. She then leaned forward, looked me straight in the eyes, and whispered, "Everett and I trained a Dragon." I furrowed my brow and looked at her in disbelief and confusion. Everett leaned over and waved his hand.

"Allow me to explain." I turned to him, put my elbows on my knees and rested my chin on my hands. "Peelah was showing me her maps and guided me through a few mazes, when a flock of Terrible Terrors appeared and blocked our path. At the time, we were both 15 years old and thought, 'Oh, hey, I can use the skills I learned in Dragon Training!' But Peelah stopped me. She kneeled to the ground and held out her hand for one of the Terrors to come and sniff it. A few took notice, and some hissed. One came right up to me and hissed, causing me to drop my axe. I reached for it but Peelah told me to stop, so I listened.

"A Terror slowly made his way from the middle of the flock to Peelah's hand and sniffed it. He must have thought she wasn't a threat because he decided to rub himself all over her hand!" They both chuckled and I smiled.

"Did he crawl up on your shoulders, Peelah?" I asked her. She nodded.

"In fact, yes, he did. It was quite a sight. The flock took off and so did our Terror until only a few years ago, did we see him again." I tilted my head slightly and furrowed my brow again.

"How?"

"Alvin. He captured him not long ago and stuck him in the Dragon cages with all the others. He's still there, and, if I'm not mistaken, you met him a few days ago didn't you?" I gasped and eagerly switched positions.

"That was your Terror? Maybe why he was so nice to me was because he could smell your scent on me? Or, maybe, he just knew that I was your friend?" Peelah smiled and put her hand on my shoulder. Her hand was

very cold.

"I'll be getting to that part later today in your training. But for right now, I say we halt story time for a little bit and we get to your training." I sighed and crossed my arms.

"Fine."

"Everett will be helping you with hand to hand combat while I'll be working the weapons with you. But first, you have to show us what you know." I nodded. "How's your side?" I shrugged and took off my vest. I lifted up my shirt to look at the bruise. "It's nearly invisible! ViVi was right, Camden, that rock really does do wonders!" I let my shirt fall and I smiled at her. "Okay, kiddo, time to get down to business. Everett, you take care of him for the first half of the day, after lunch rolls around, I'll take him for weapons and then we'll see what you've learned, okay Cam?" I nodded and turned to Everett as Peelah stood and left the room.

"Alright kid. You still got that rock from ViVi?" I nodded, "Good. You're gonna need it."

We started with the basics. Simple maneuvers. Blocks, basic punches. All of which I was familiar. Back on the mainland, in my village, I was the top fighter next to my neighbor, Joht, who was also one of my best friends. Joht taught me most of what I know; aside from the little my dad was able to teach me.

"Hand here, set your foot forward, other hand right... here!" Everett punched my hands and I blocked it, feeling the sting of his hit in my palms. "You're a quick learner, kid. Now, here's how you put it in to action." Everett explained to me how to quickly put your hands up in case of an attack to your face, but he didn't tell me about blows to your stomach. "Should you ever encounter a time where you don't have enough time to throw your hands up, dive." He showed me how to avoid attacks with my hands, my feet and even my weapon which wasn't his job.

We moved on in the training to throwing the punches and initiating front, side, back, roundhouse, stomp and fly kicks. By the end of the four hour session, I was nearly able to beat up Everett.

"You'll need lots of practice and of course, you have to build up that muscle if you want it to hurt. Keep those moves in mind, but now, I want you to drop it all. You're small, skinny, quick. Most of the other kids on this island, if any at all, are bigger than you, thicker, bigger boned. Use your size to your advantage. When going after someone like me or like those kids, you want to get at their torso, like this." He demonstrated attacking someone bigger on a dummy we had made out of wheat sacks, a pole and an extra helmet. He stood in his attack stance and rushed the dummy, at its stomach, the torso, and knocked the dummy over. "You try."

I stood the dummy back up and stood before it, ready to attack. Everett counted down from three.

"Three..." I clenched my fists, "Two... One.. Go!" I lunged at the dummy's torso and barely made it move. I angrily punched it and sharply in took a breath through my clenched teeth. "It takes time and practice, kid. Give it another go." I stood, waited, then ran at

it again, throwing myself with a little more force this time. The dummy wobbled, but didn't fall. I angrily furrowed my brow and bit my lower lip. Everett patted my back and I shrugged away. "It's okay... You'll get him one of these days."

Peelah sauntered in carrying a shield covered with sticks stuck through cooked fish. She was humming a pretty little tune that seemed out of place with how I was feeling. I impatiently tapped my foot and crossing my arms.

"Calm down, Cam, You're overreacting, kiddo. Not everybody gets it right the first time!" Everett said, walking over to Peelah and taking one of the sticks off the shield.

"Ay, Camden, why don't you simmer down some and join us for some eats?" Peelah said, I sighed and nodded.

She was right, I probably was overreacting. I walked to them, picked up a fish on a stick and sat next to Peelah. "So Camden, what have you learned from Everett? Can you show me some moves?" Peelah asked as I took a bite out of my fish. I nodded, set my fish down and stood.

"Everett," I said, between swallows, "Would you fight me please?" Everett laughed and nodded.

"Of course."

"Don't be too easy on me, but not so hard either, okay?"

"Okay, Cam."

We moved to the middle of the floor and took a few steps away from each other. I turned to face him, sidestepping slowly in order to find the right entry point. Everett made the first attack, drawing a punch near my face. I threw my hands up and foot out like he'd taught me then in turn, I quickly ducked, sweeping my leg out from beneath me, knocking Everett off balance.

He stood quickly and I dove out of the way, avoiding a roundhouse kick. He dove after me and I rolled, him smashing in to the ground. I jumped and landed on top of him. "Time!" I shouted. Everett shrugged me off his back and stood. I stood and walked back to Peelah but was grabbed from behind by Everett. I gasped and without thinking, elbowed him in the ribs, causing him to drop me and clutch his side. I proceeded to throw myself at him just as he told me to at the dummy.

Everett and I fell hard to the ground. "Time!" He shouted. I scrambled off of him and ran back to my fish, not giving him the opportunity to grab me from behind like he'd done before. "I never taught you that..." He said, holding his ribs with one hand. "Where did you...?"

I shrugged. "I don't know, I just kind of... felt it." I responded, taking a huge chunk out of my fish. Everett chuckled and came back to sit with us. I looked at the ground as I ate, listening to Peelah and Everett catch up. "Peelah?" I asked. She looked over at me and set her stick of fish down. All that was left of it was stick and fish bones. "What time is it?"

"It was about one or two after noon, last I checked." I nodded and finished my fish. Everett stood, thanked Peelah for lunch and turned to me.

"I'll be back in a week. I know you have your test in a few days but I want to see your improvement. Sound good?" He asked, holding his hand out for me to shake. I nodded, taking his hand and shaking it up and down awkwardly. Everett left and I finished my fish, then took the shield with the sticks back up to the hearth and dumped them there, watching them light fire and burn in the center on the hearth.

"Camden, you ready to start weapons training?" Peelah called from down in the green room.

"Yeah, I'll be there in a sec, let me grab my dagger." I shouted. I ran up the stairs in to my room to grab my dagger when I realized I had it in my belt the whole time. I huffed and turned, facing the window. Outside were two girls cowering outside a house across the way in the shadow of a burly man. The man raised his hand to the girls and I drew in a sharp breath.

"No!" I shouted. The man stopped, looked around and glowered at his surroundings. I sat on the window sill and slid down to the rocky ground and ran out in to the open. The man had turned back to the girls and was about to hit them. Right then, I realized who the man was.

Pilgrit.

I laughed out loud and he turned to meet my gaze with the same crazed smile.

"What business do you have tormenting all these kids?" I asked him. He took a swig of alcohol from his hand-mug. I waved at the kids, shooing them away. I mouthed the word help to them. The taller one nodded and dragged her little sister away at a run. "Go on, I'm waiting." I tapped my foot to emphasize my statement. He rolled his eyes and took another swig.

"What are ye' going to do about it, eh kid?" He laughed, "Fight me? We already know what I can do to ye! There ain't nothin' you can do to me.

I stepped closer to him, cautiously. "We'll just see about that." I did just as Everett taught me. I ran at him, catching him off guard, and threw myself at his torso, knocking him over.

He fell, catching himself with his mug on the ground, the contents spilling everywhere. I scrambled off of him before he could hit me. I ran around behind him and side kicked him. He grunted and stood up, swaying slightly. He wiped some sweat off his lip and turned towards me again. He rushed at me and swung his now broken and splintery mug at me. I sidestepped to avoid the hit and mostly succeeded, only, the mug hit my shoulder, flinging me back. I cried out in pain and clutched my shoulder. When I withdrew my hand, it was covered with blood. I ignored the pain and rushed at him, jumping to the side at the last second and landing a punch on his jaw. He spun around, rubbing on his jaw with his good hand. I ran at him again, only this

time, he caught me by the collar of my shirt. He lifted me up and held me with his good hand, shaking the mug off the hilt for his hand, revealing a sharp blade. He held it up to my neck.

"Hey. Hey! Put him down!" Someone called. "Hey!" It was Everett. I didn't dare turn my head to see him. Pilgrit never dropped his gaze on me. It was almost as if he didn't hear Everett calling. I closed my eyes and breathed deeply.

"I should just kill you right now," He pushed the sharp side closer to my neck, fiercely. "Shouldn't I?" He barked. I blinked and swallowed. Without thinking, I kicked him hard in the gut. He dropped me and fell to his knees. I kicked his face hard, stepping on his throat only enough to restrict his breathing slightly.

"Do not touch those kids, ever. Any other kids you dare try and hurt, I will find you, and I will kill you, Pilgrit." He struggled slightly and I pressed my foot down on his throat a little harder. "You are a disgrace. You deserved that banishment. You deserve to fall off the edge of this world."

"Weird," He choked, "That's exactly- what Stoick said," He coughed, "When he tied me to the mast." He coughed again. I removed my foot and walked briskly over to Everett. He had the girls by his side, one in his arms, the other hiding behind his leg. We turned to walk back to Peelah's house and when I glanced behind me, Pilgrit had rolled over on to all fours and was hacking up a storm behind us.

"When I said practice, I didn't mean pick fights. Especially not with Pilgrit." I looked at the ground and walked quietly. "But thank you for saving my girls."

"Your girls?" I asked.

"Well, they're my sisters' girls, but we're really close, right girls?" The girls nodded. We reached Peelah's house and I thanked Everett for walking me home. Just as I was about to open the door, one of the girls spoke.

"Wait!" She hollered. She ran up to me and hugged me. "Thank you for saving my sister and me." I hesitated, then wrapped my arms around her.

She withdrew and looked at me. "Your eyes are so cool!" She exclaimed. "Maia! Come look at his eyes."

The littler girl, I assumed her name was Maia, pushed away from Everett and slowly walked up to me, her thumb to her mouth. She looked up at me and I kneeled down. She took a step behind her sister, peeking out from behind her side. I held out my hand for one of them to shake.

"Hi Maia. I'm Camden." Her sister took my hand and shook it wildly.

"Hi Camden! I'm Pennebelle. People here call me Post sometimes, but you can call me Pennie." I chuckled.

"Why do people call you Post?"

"Because I can stand as still as a post! Wanna see?" Before I could answer, she was standing straight, fingers pointed and face still. I laughed along with Everett. "See?" She said, breaking her pose. I nodded.

"Well, Pennie, Maia, it was nice meeting you." I turned to go inside and looked back. "Thanks Everett." He nodded and I went inside to find an angry Peelah standing, arms crossed, foot tapping. "Hey... Sorry..." I came in, feeling guilt.

"We did not teach you how to defend yourself so you could just go and... and pick fights Camden! I am very disappointed in you, boy!" She lectured me for another 15 minutes or so before sighing and massaging her temples. "Go down to the training room, we're going to train for the rest of the day."

I nodded and proceeded to walk to the training room, Peelah close in tow. For the rest of the day, Peelah taught me how to use all different kinds of weapons. She taught me the history of some, special techniques of others and of course, basic handling. While screwing around with a dragon skin, hilted sword, I hit Everett and I's homemade dummy and cut it straight through the middle, leaving a huge gash in the bag while its contents spilled all over the floor. I immediately put the sword down and threw my hands behind my back, feeling my face grow warm and uncomfortable.

Peelah laughed and gestured for me to sit in front of her. "Take out your dagger," She instructed. I pulled out my dagger from my vest and handed it to her, sitting down in the process. She took it from me and laid it flat across her palm. "This here dagger is very special," She stated, running her hand over the hilt. "These markings are in an ancient language, only known to the Dragons. Very few people have the ability to speak the ancient language. Those people are almost unheard of nowadays. Alvin had them all killed off, as he didn't want them to side with the Dragons in this dangerous war.

"Dragonese, the name of the language, is hard to grasp. The words are jumbled up and you have to figure out what the markings say. Speaking it is a whole other story though. There is a lot to learn before someone can speak Dragonese, even in the slightest bit. Others are born speaking the language. Though, the language cannot be learned by just anyone," She looked at me to find a very confused boy in her midst, "It's a very hard concept to grasp, but it gets easier to understand the more often its explained." I nodded.

"This dagger has an almost magical spark to it. A blessing from the Gods, even. It adapts to your situation. Say you were in battle with a Monstrous Nightmare, like you were, and when you hold it in position so the Dragon can see the markings, he or she will back down or help you. It all depends on the surroundings, the situation, or just how you're feeling towards the Dragon. It makes them much easier to train." She handed me back the dagger and I put it back in my vest where it was hidden.

"You are never to lose that dagger, understood, Camden?" I nodded vigorously and set my hands in my lap. "Good. I'll explain more to you about the dagger later, but for now, lets go get some dinner. It's around time for the market to be getting in fresh shipments." We stood and went up out of the training room, closed the green wall and went upstairs.

"Would you like to come with me Camden?"

"Sure."

We left the house and made our way through town to the dull marketplace. It was full of people and carts full of everything. For such a dull and scary island, they sure have a lot to offer. Peelah sped up and I hurried to keep up, but every turn made, person bumped in to, I would lose her for a split second.

I bumped in to another person and lost Peelah for sure. I stood, looking around wildly, my anxiety levels raising. I was lost in a town I barely knew. I walked forward to be greeted with a rush of wind and a hard body slamming in to me.

"Help, I have to go, help me please!" She called, desperately. Our legs were tangled and her hair was in my face. I held her shoulders and lifted her with the little strength I had. She was absolutely stunning.

Her hair was lighter than the sun, her face, pinkish. Her eyes were the color of her shirt, violet. In her hair was a headband, pulling back only part of her hair out of her face. Around her torso was a sash of some sort, with only one weapon, a dagger similar to mine.

"Oh, please, hang on, let me—" She pushed up off me and cried out, terrified. I stood up, pulling her along with me. She jumped behind me and shook violently.

"I told you not to run!" Someone shouted. The marketplace grew quieter, but not silent. I stood in front of her, confused. "Girl, get back here!" They shouted again. I recognized the gruff voice. Pilgrit. He was still drunk. I readied my stance, defensive, to protect. He will not lay a finger on her.

"You again?" He said, running in to someone and looking to me. We made eye contact and he groaned, loudly.

"I thought I took care of you earlier today when I beat your backside." I called out to him. "Go home Pilgrit, I won."

"I demand a rematch. Winner takes the girl home." She smiled drunkenly, devilishly. The girl behind me squeaked in panic.

"I won't let him take you." I whispered to her.

And the brawl began.

5. Wynter (Preview)

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Wynter," she answered, shyly. "What's yours?"

"Camden," I say, wiping sweat off my forehead.

"Well, Camden, thanks for saving my life." She reached out to me,

wrapping her arms around my neck. I hesitated and swallowed hard before returning the gesture. I stayed there for a moment and let go, letting my arms hover over her back. Wynter still hadn't let go.

Confused, I looked to Peelah for help. She smiled and nodded, waving her arm in a way that seemed to mean, "Hug her again!" So I did. Wynter remained trembling in my arms.

"Hey, why don't you come stay with us? Pilgrit is no guardian for a kid like you or me," I said, "You'll be safe with us." Wynter nodded and I held her a little tighter. She let go and face me, self-consciously grasping her arm. She looked at the ground and pushed a stray strand of hair out of her face.

"Sorry, that was a longer hug than I thought... I am just... much shaken."

"It's not a problem. Come with me," I held out my hand for her to take. She stared at it shortly, then took it, very gingerly. I smiled at her, "You're going to _love _Peelah!"

End
file.